

Asymptomatic Intestinal Pneumatosis In Oncologic Patients

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BACKGROUND: Pneumatosis intestinalis is defined by the presence of gas in the gut wall. Computed tomography (CT) is the best exam for diagnosis. Cancer is an important risk factor, either due the disease itself or its treatment. May be asymptomatic and self-limiting, or be part of a serious systemic condition, and the differentiation between these two extremes is important for the clinical management of the patient.

HYPOTHESIS: The aim of this study is to describe and discuss four cases of asymptomatic intestinal pneumatosis in oncologic patients.

METHODS: Analytical, retrospective single-center study, conducted by reviewing exam images and electronic medical records of patients with finding of pneumatosis of the gastrointestinal tract in CT scans of the abdomen, performed at the Department of Diagnostic Imaging of A.C. Camargo Cancer Center between the years 2014 and 2015. Asymptomatic cases were selected for discussion.

RESULTS: MT, female, 68 years and KVRV, male, 8 years, both with acute myeloid leukemia in chemotherapy; IAS, male, 70, metastatic kidney cancer in chemotherapy; and CABJ, male, 37, with non-Hodgkin lymphoma in complete remission 3 months after cessation of therapy. All showed intestinal pneumatosis in CT scans of the abdomen, without symptoms or significant changes in physical examination. It was noted both cystic and linear pattern, predominantly in the colon, and verified association with aeroportogram in one patient. They were conducted conservatively without complications related to pneumatosis. Control exams were performed in two patients, there was remission of pneumatosis in one and the persistence in another. The pediatric patient died two months after the diagnosis of pneumatosis, from complications related to leukemia. The others keep clinical monitoring. The intestinal pneumatosis is a rare event, with increased incidence in oncologic population. Recognition of asymptomatic cases and with benign evolution prevents unnecessary medical and surgical interventions.